

DYNAMIC RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY DEVICES AND METHOD OF
CONTROLLING REFRESH OPERATION THEREOF

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

5 This application claims priority to Korean Patent Application No. 10-2002-0082674, filed on December 23, 2002, in the Korean Intellectual Property Office, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

10 The invention relates to integrated circuit devices, and more particularly, to Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM) devices and methods of operating DRAM devices.

BACKGROUND

15 A DRAM device may need to perform a refresh operation periodically to maintain data stored therein. As understood by those skilled in the art, a memory controller, that is separate from the DRAM device, is sometimes used to control operation of the DRAM device (including the refresh operations) by issuing commands to the DRAM device. For example, the memory controller can issue a
20 refresh command to the DRAM device so that the DRAM device performs a refresh operation. The DRAM device may be unable to perform other operations while performing a refresh operation.

 The DRAM controller may be designed to periodically issue refresh commands in a set period of time. However, the DRAM controller may issue more
25 refresh commands than required, thereby causing the DRAM device to perform unnecessary refresh operations, which may result in increased DRAM power consumption.

SUMMARY

30 A Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM) device can include a DRAM cell array configured to be periodically refreshed and a refresh control circuit that is configured to issue an internal refresh command to the DRAM cell array to provide periodic refresh of the DRAM cell array. The refresh control circuit can further

include a refresh information signal to external of the DRAM device before the internal refresh command is issued to the DRAM cell array.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 FIG. 1 is a block diagram that illustrates embodiments of DRAM devices according to the present invention.

 FIG. 2 is a timing diagram that illustrates embodiments of refresh operations of the DRAM memory devices illustrated by FIG. 1.

10 DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS ACCORDING TO THE INVENTION

 The present invention will now be described more fully with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as being limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these
15 embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete and will fully convey the concept of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

 Referring to FIG. 1, the memory device of the present invention includes a memory cell array 11, a refresh control circuit 13, a buffer 15, a command and
20 address decoder 17, and a command and address buffer 19.

 In particular, the refresh control circuit 13 periodically issues an internal refresh command RCOM in order to refresh the memory cell array 11 without an externally issued refresh command. Also, the refresh control circuit 13 generates a refresh information signal REFSH and outputs it before the memory cell array 11 is
25 refreshed.

 The command and address buffer 19 receives and buffers a command COM and an address ADD, which are issued externally. The command and address decoder 17 decodes the buffered command and address and controls the refresh control circuit 13 and the memory cell array 11.

30 Specifically, in the memory device, the refresh information signal REFSH is transmitted to a memory controller (external to the memory device), and the memory cell array 11 is refreshed a predetermined delay time after the refresh information signal REFSH is activated. In doing so, the memory device performs an operation

according to a command, which is input to the memory device, before the memory controller receives the refresh information signal REFSH from the memory device.

In other words, when the memory device receives a command issued by the external memory controller during the predetermined delay time, the memory device
5 performs the requested operation before the refresh operation is performed. Thus, the memory device will perform a requested operation even though a refresh operation maybe performed soon.

As shown in FIG. 2, when the memory device determines that a refresh operation is needed, the memory cell array 11 is refreshed a predetermined delay time
10 t_D after the refresh information signal REFSH is activated (low). If the memory device receives a command from the memory controller during the predetermined delay time t_D , an operation according to the command is performed before the memory cell array 11 is refreshed. After the requested operation is completed, the refresh control circuit 13 may complete the refresh operation (if still needed).

When the refresh operation is complete, the refresh control circuit 13
15 deactivates the refresh information signal REFSH to be high and informs the memory controller that a write/read operation can be normally performed. Meanwhile, unlike the foregoing refresh control method, after the refresh information signal is activated to be low, the memory device may await a command and perform a requested
20 operation according to the command before the memory cell array 11 is refreshed.

As described above, embodiments of memory devices according to the invention can perform a refresh operation without an externally issued refresh (from the memory controller). Accordingly, unnecessary refresh operations may be reduced, thus reducing power consumption.

In the drawings and specification, there have been disclosed embodiments
25 according to the invention and, although, specific terms are employed, they are used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for purposes of limitation. As for the scope of the invention, it is to be set forth in the following claims. Therefore, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that various changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present
30 invention as defined by the following claims.